

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1227

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

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TAGS: PINT, XG, UK, EI

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: UDA CHARGES
CRAIG WITH "CONFIDENCE GAME" ATTEMPT

REF: BELFAST 99

1. ULSTER DEFENSE ASSOCIATION (UDA) MARCH 1 ON EVE OF
FINAL CONVENTION SESSION CHARGED WILLIAM CRAIG AND VANGUARD
PARTY HAD PLANNED CONFIDENCE TRICK ON SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) BUT THAT CRAIG HAD
BEEN "CONNED" INTO BELIEVING SDLP ARE "REALLY A
GREAT BUNCH OF BOYS". CHARGE CAME IN FLURRY OF LAST
MINUTE RECRIMINATIONS ON EVIDENT FAILURE CONVENTION TO
DEVISE FORMULA FOR DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT IN PROVINCE.
ACCORDING UDA SPOKESMAN IN PRIVATE MEETINGS LAST YEAR
CRAIG ASSURED UDA AND OTHER PARAMILITARY LEADERSHIP THAT
HIS PROPOSAL FOR VOLUNTARY COALITION WAS TO SPLIT THE
SDLP, REGAIN A NORTHERN IRELAND PARLIAMENT AND CONTROL OF
SECURITY AND WIELD POWER SO RIGIDLY THAT SDLP WOULD HAVE NO
CHOICE BUT TO WITHDRAW FROM COALITION. UDA SUPPORTED THIS
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TACTIC, ACCORDING TO STATEMENT, BUT WITHDREW SUPPORT WHEN

IT BECAME APPARENT THAT CRAIG HAD BEEN HIMSELF CONNED INTO BELIEVING THAT THE SDLP "ARE SO GENUINE THAT HE COULD ACTUALLY WORK WITH THEM IN A NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT CONTRARY TO THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE". IT WAS CONTINUED SUPPORT OF VANGUARD AND CRAIG BY GLENN BARR THAT LED TO DISAGREEMENT WITH UDA AND HIS RESIGNATION AS SPOKESMAN (REFTEL), STATEMENT CONTINUED.

2. VANGUARD RIPOSTED WITH REJECTION UDA ALLEGATION AND CHARGE THAT LOYALIST PEOPLE HAD BEEN CONNED BY UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) PROCLAIMING THAT UUUC CAPABLE OF GETTING GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT DURING CONVENTION DEBATE VANGUARD WILL NAME THOSE MEMBERS UUUC WHO HAD ORIGINALLY GIVEN PRIVATE ASSURANCES THAT THEY WOULD SUPPORT VOLUNTARY COALITION PROPOSAL IN PHASE TWO CONVENTION.

3. WHO WAS CONNING WHOM IN CONVENTION CONTEXT IS LARGELY ACADEMIC NOW. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTARY COALITION IN CONVENTION DEBATE TODAY AND POSSIBLY CONTINUING TOMORROW WILL BE FAR SHORT OF THAT NECESSARY TO CONVINCE GOVERNMENT THAT REFERENDUM FEASIBLE. ONLY FOUR VANGUARD CONVENTION MEMBERS AND EIGHT FROM ALLIANCE PARTY HAVE ENDORSED PROPOSAL. UNIONIST PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND UNCOMMITTED ALTHOUGH BRIAN FAULKNER FAVORS REFERENDUM. SDLP EXPECTED TO VOTE AGAINST UUUC PROPOSALS AND ABSTAIN IN VOTE ON CRAIG AMENDMENT.

4. IT CLEAR UUUC POLITICIANS ARE NOT ATTEMPTING TO CON THEMSELVES. REPORTS OF PRIVATE UUUC MEETINGS DURING PAST WEEK INDICATE THAT DISCUSSIONS CENTERED AROUND NOT WHETHER BRITISH WILL REJECT UUUC PROPOSALS BUT RATHER WHAT TO DO ABOUT CONTINUED DIRECT RULE. ERNEST BAIRD OF UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST MOVEMENT BELIEVED TO FAVOR MOUNTING ACTIVE RESISTANCE ON LINES ULSTER WORKERS COUNCIL STRIKE OF MAY 1974. SO FAR THESE TACTICS OPPOSED BY DEMOCRATIC AND OFFICIAL UNIONISTS.

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